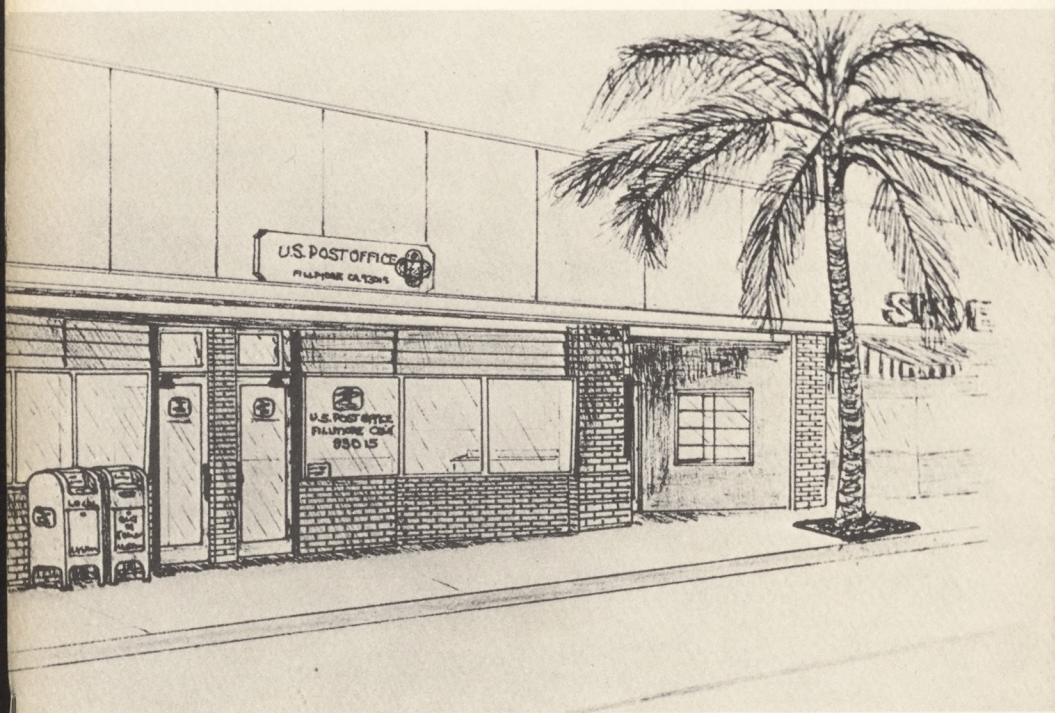


THE VENTURA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



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by ELLEN M. FINLEY

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Cover illustration by Mike O'Brien, Fillmore Postal Clerk. Photographs on pages 22 and 23 by the author. Photo on page 3 from the VCMHA collection; remaining photos from the Fillmore Historical Museum files.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ellen M. Finley and her husband Paul came to Ventura County in September of 1984 when Paul joined the Aero Products Division of Litton Industries, at that time newly relocated in Moorpark. The couple had the good fortune to lease the historic ranch house overlooking the Elkins Golf Course near Fillmore. Ellen immediately became fascinated by Judge Caswell Carl Elkins, that hardy pioneer who had come to Fillmore in 1887, and who had built his dream house "in the arm of the mountain" when he was in his eighties. This interest in Judge Elkins led Ellen to begin a genealogical search into his background, a project which has taken five years and will culminate late this spring in the publication of a book for the members of the Elkins family.

Through extensive research into the life and times of Judge Elkins, Ellen also became interested in the history of Fillmore. During the city's centennial year, 1988, the *Fillmore Herald* published five of her articles about Fillmore's personalities, institutions, and buildings.

Ellen comes by her keen interest in history naturally, having been born and brought up in Elmira, New York, in the historic Chemung Valley, home of the legendary Seneca Indian Nation, and site of a Revolutionary War battle led by General John Sullivan. Ellen's Irish immigrant grandfather worked as gardener for the Langdon family whose daughter, Olivia, married author Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). The Clemens home, Quarry Farm — in which Mark Twain wrote some of his most famous novels — overlooks the Chemung Valley.

In 1942, Ellen graduated from Elmira College with a degree in English and speech, going on to earn a Master of Arts Degree in Dramatic Literature from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. She then taught English and drama in the local high school until her marriage to Paul L. Finley, also an Elmira native. The couple came to California in 1968.

After completion of the Elkins project, Ellen hopes to concentrate on compiling her memories of her own childhood and sketches of her own ancestors — however, she does not rule out the possibility of more research into Fillmore's past.

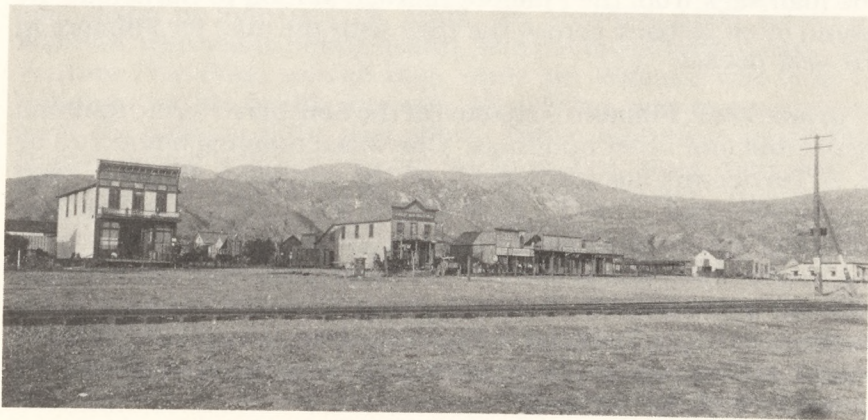
MOVING THE MAIL: Post Offices of the Sespe

by ELLEN M. FINLEY

I. The History of the Fillmore Post Office

The Fillmore Post Office was established on October 24, 1887, with the appointment of Elbert Bailey Turner as the first postmaster. Since Fillmore was not recorded as an official city until August 1, 1888, there was a post office before there was a city.

Prior to Mr. Turner's appointment, the people of Fillmore had to go to Bardsdale for their mail. This was not always easy. In those days, there was no bridge across the Santa Clara. Fording the river was often dangerous and sometimes impossible. Fortunately, Bardsdale's first postmaster, Royce G. Surdam, appointed May 18,



FILLMORE'S FIRST POST OFFICE

*E.B. Turner's Rooming House, Northwest Corner Main and Central
1887-1888*

FILLMORE'S THIRD POST OFFICE

*C.C. Elkins' General Merchandise Store
Northeast Corner Main and Central
1889-1898*



FILLMORE'S SECOND POST OFFICE

Fillmore Railroad Depot (Now the Fillmore Museum) 1888-1889

1887, was a good-natured, accommodating man. Having carried the mail sack from the Fillmore railroad station to Bardsdale, he would often go back across the river with the mail for Fillmore in his vest pocket.¹

In late 1887, Fillmore consisted of the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot and four other buildings. One was a rooming house run by E. B. Turner and his wife, located on the northwest corner of what is now Main and Central.² According to Mrs. Turner, the first post office in Fillmore was a goods box in a front bedroom of their rooming house. After about one year, the post office was moved to the railroad depot and Mr. Turner appointed George Tighe assistant postmaster. Mrs. Turner quotes her husband as saying that there wasn't any money in the position of postmaster and it was "no honor to work for nothing."³

On Christmas Day, 1887, Caswell Carl Elkins and his family arrived in Fillmore. As soon as possible, Mr. Elkins erected a two-story building on the northeast corner of Main and Central where the Bank of A. Levy now stands. The first floor was a badly needed general merchandise store; the Elkins family, for a time, used the second floor as their residence.⁴ On March 26, 1889, C. C. Elkins

was appointed Fillmore's second postmaster and kept the post office in his store.⁵

The big store building at the northeast corner of Main and Central remained the location of the post office for about ten years. During this period, Mr. Elkins was devoting most of his time to the citrus industry, apparently leasing his stock and store. In 1891, the store was run by L. H. Amsbury and his partner, George S. Barnes.⁶ Amsbury was appointed postmaster on September 14, 1891.



*FILLMORE'S FOURTH POST OFFICE
Richard Stephens' Grocery Store
Northwest Corner Main and Central
1898-1910*

Next to lease the store was C. G. Willman who was appointed postmaster on February 18, 1892. By March 8, 1895, however, Willman, who was in failing health, sold out to James Duncan. The *Ventura Free Press* related that, while Mr. Willman was to go to Honolulu for his health, his wife, Miss Edna, was to continue to serve the patrons of the post office. Public sentiment apparently favored letting Willman run out his term; but, since there was "a large crop of aspirants for the position of postmaster," this did not happen. On April 8, 1895, S. A. Guiberson, Jr. was appointed postmaster and shortly thereafter both Mr. and Mrs. Willman departed for Honolulu.⁷

During Guiberson's tenure as postmaster, the post office probably remained at the same location, the store now run by James Duncan. Duncan was a Scotsman, "just over from the land of oatmeal and shorter catechism."⁸ Coming to Fillmore to visit friends, he found the whole valley area extremely attractive so decided to stay.⁹ Soon after he took over the store from Willman, Duncan hired as a clerk a young fellow countryman, Richard Stephens. The two soon became partners. Ads for Duncan and Stephens pointed out that the store was the location of the post office as well as a telephone.

By January 28, 1898, the partners had moved their business across the street to an old tin building on the northwest corner of Main and Central; the Elkins store had been sold to C. A. Harmonson.¹⁰ On November 17 of that year, James Duncan died. On the same day, ironically, Richard Stephens was appointed Fillmore's sixth postmaster, a position he was to hold until 1915, making him the first Fillmore postmaster whose tenure lasted more than a few years. Stephens' appointment was opposed vigorously by the Elkins family, for some reason not now known. Nor was the opposition aware, in 1898, of the one thing which could have kept Stephens from the appointment —he had not yet become an American citizen!¹¹

Now the fourth home of the post office was the same as its first — the northwest corner of Main and Central where Turner's rooming house had stood. In later years, Richard Stephens recalled the old tin building which was his first store — with lock-boxes for the mail on the outside of the store. People awaiting mail would line up on the sidewalk. The arrival of the mail was something of an event, like the arrival and departure of daily trains.¹² Soon Stephens purchased the property adjacent to the corner and announced plans for a new building.¹³ Completed in 1910, this building still stands today, now doing business as Segovia's Fillmore Market. On the sidewalk in front of the corner entrance, the name "Stephens" still can be seen in large letters of green tile on white.

The post office was in the same building as the store, but separated — with a connecting door as well as a front door on Central Avenue. By 1911, the store was occupied by the Cash Commercial Company operated by Charles Harthorn. Stephens remained postmaster, assisted by his wife, Stella, and Nell Ward Crippen.¹⁴ A picture of the Cash Commercial Company Store, taken in 1914, shows a decorative cornice on the Central Avenue side with a flag flying over the post office.¹⁵ The cornice and flagpole remain today over a wooden insert which probably covers the former front door of the post office.

When Richard Stephens retired as postmaster after sixteen years of service, Philippe P. (Phil) Roche was appointed to the position (February 25, 1915). Roche owned a jewelry store on the east side of Central,¹⁶ just north of Mack Wooldridge's Orange Leaf



FILLMORE'S FIFTH POST OFFICE

*Richard Stephens' Grocery Store, Northwest Corner Main & Central
1910-1911*

*Cash Commercial Company
1911-1916*

Cafe, about where the Ballard Furniture Store is located in 1989. The post office established temporary quarters in Roche's Jewelry Store on December 3, 1917, to remain there until permanent quarters could be found.¹⁷

There is some confusion about the location of the Fillmore Post Office between its long-time tenure in the Stephens Building and its temporary headquarters in Roche's Jewelry Store. Three articles in the *Fillmore Herald* during this period provide some information. First, an article dated February 4, 1916, states that the Cash Commercial Company Store was undergoing extensive alterations. The second, dated October 20, 1916, has this to say: "Another index of Fillmore's growth is the demand for post office boxes. When the office was moved to its new location about six months ago, the new equipment gave the office 115 boxes more than were in the old office. These have all been rented, and Post Master Roche is planning to add 100 more boxes."

The third article, dated November 16, 1917, states: "The Post

Office is going into a new location. The government flag above the Fillmore Post Office quarters is soon to be hoisted above the Roche Building across the street where temporary quarters of the Post Office are to be established about December 1st till permanent quarters are found. The rooms to be vacated will be converted into a cafe which W. C. Collins will conduct."



FILLMORE'S SEVENTH POST OFFICE
Phil Roche's Jewelry Store, East Side of Central
(Location of Ballard Furniture, 1989)
12/3/1917-1/3/1920

It would appear from these *Fillmore Herald* quotes that the post office moved early in 1916 when the Cash Commercial Company was remodeling the Stephens Building, and that for about two years was located on the west side of Central across from Roche's Jewelry Store, placing it about where the Central Market is in 1989.

After Fillmore incorporated in 1914, there was an evident need for a larger more convenient post office. When the modern elegant Masonic Building was erected in 1919, space was provided at 455 Sespe Avenue. The post office opened for business there Monday morning, January 5, 1920.¹⁸ Old-timers may recall that the

phone number then was 336. When Phil Roche retired in the summer of 1921, T. H. Zimmerman was appointed acting postmaster, receiving the appointment on February 10, 1922.

Although the Masonic Building was the most spacious location up to this point in the long history of the Fillmore Post Office, there seemed to be a constant demand for more boxes to accommodate



FILLMORE'S EIGHTH POST OFFICE
Masonic Building, 455 Sespe Avenue
1/5/1920-6/2/1951

the city's ever-increasing population. In an article in the *Fillmore Herald*, February 2, 1940, former postmaster Richard Stephens recalled that the old fixtures were used until the Masonic Building was erected. Then other fixtures were rented from an Indianapolis firm. As there were still not a sufficient number of boxes to fulfill the need, in 1940 discarded fixtures were purchased from the Venice, California, Post Office. These "new" boxes were longer and deeper than the old ones and required keys instead of lock combinations.

The City of Fillmore continued to grow at a steady rate so that eventually the post office outgrew its home in the Masonic Building. In 1951, Duard E. Goble, local business man, hired a local contractor, George Dipple, to construct a building in the space on the west side of Central formerly occupied by the Fillmore Cafe and Wilson's Furniture Store.¹⁹ Plans called for a one-story commercial building with two brick store-fronts and a tall panelized stucco parapet.²⁰ The larger store-front with two doors would house the post office, built to the department's own specifications; the smaller store-front would accommodate Mr. Goble's jewelry store.

On April 6, 1951, the post office department passed approval on the Goble Building²¹ and, on Monday morning, June 4, the Fillmore Post Office opened for business as usual at 333 Central Avenue, the location it still occupies. Joel K. L. Schwartz, postmaster at the time of the move, announced that the same mail boxes would be used temporarily in the new lobby; within a few months, a completely new set of boxes would be installed, giving the local branch a total of 485 boxes, 175 more than they had had in the Masonic Building.²² (When the mail boxes currently in use were installed, several sections of the old lock combination boxes were given to the Fillmore Museum. They may be seen in the renovated old Bardsdale Post Office located at the rear of the museum at 447 Main Street.)

Joel K. L. Schwartz is something of a legend in Fillmore history. Appointed acting postmaster on March 8, 1934, he became postmaster less than one year later, on February 9, 1935. He served in this capacity for over twenty-six years, retiring on May 31, 1961, as the oldest postmaster in point of service in Ventura County.²³

The following have been appointed since the resignation of Mr. Schwartz:

Maurice E. Ball	Acting Postmaster	May 31, 1961
Maurice E. Ball	Postmaster	July 26, 1965
Alfred V. Lopez	Officer-in-Charge	April 15, 1977
L. Louise DePatz	Officer-in-Charge	December 5, 1977
Carol A. Chaney	Postmaster	March 25, 1978
Ernie G. Figueroa	Officer-in-Charge	December 1, 1978
Edward C. Molina	Postmaster	June 16, 1979

(There is no difference between an acting postmaster and an officer-in-charge; the former was used to designate a temporary postmaster until postal reorganization in 1971, while the latter has been the preferred term since that date.)

CHANGES

In addition to different locations and postmasters, the Fillmore Post Office, through the years, has adjusted to many changes — some local, others on a federal level.

The price of stamps illustrates constant fluctuations in the economy of the United States. The first official postage stamps in this country were issued on July 1, 1847 — a five cent stamp featuring Benjamin Franklin, our nation's first postmaster; and a ten-cent stamp with the likeness of our first president, George Washington.²⁴ Forty years later, when E. B. Turner conducted Fillmore's first post office out of a goods box in the front room of his boarding house, a letter could be sent for two cents if it weighed no more than half an ounce and was going no farther than 100 miles.²⁵ The price of a stamp went to three cents by November 2, 1917.²⁶ There it remained for forty-six years, going to five cents for a one-ounce letter in 1963. From this time on, price increases have arrived with increasing regularity:

1971	8 cents
March 1974	10 cents
December 1975	13 cents
May 1978	15 cents
March 1981	18 cents
November 1981	20 cents
February 1985	22 cents
June 1988	25 cents. ²⁷

In 1911, the 4th class Fillmore Post Office graduated to 3rd class. The postmaster's position then became a presidential office with the postmaster receiving a salary instead of a percentage of the mail cancellations. This change to 3rd class was made possible because of a great increase in business, the amount of mail and the sale of stamps being almost double what they had been in earlier years.²⁸

Parcel post stamps went on sale January 1, 1913. COD and insured mail were also introduced at this time. The United States was divided into eight postal zones which, with new parcel post laws, served to facilitate the sending of packages.²⁹

In 1916, Fillmore's first official full-time postal clerk was appointed — Leona Galvin, who served faithfully in this capacity for forty-two years.³⁰

Though there was no mail delivery in Fillmore until 1936, there had been delivery of mail by rural route carriers since the Bardsdale Post Office was discontinued in 1906. Early carriers were Byron Wylie and E. B. Haynes.³¹ On February 18, 1916, the *Herald* mentioned rural carriers Haynes, Route #1, served 271 families; and Leo Hall, Route #2, 126 families. An August 17, 1917 article in the *Herald* mentioned rural carriers E. B. Haynes, RD Route 1, and Kenneth A. Lawton, RD Route 2. Rural delivery, proclaimed the *Herald*, was about to go modern. On his daily rounds, Haynes was to replace his faithful horse with a "flivver"! There was no follow-up article on the results of this experiment.

The federal post office took another step forward into the future in 1918. It was in this year that the first air mail flight delivered mail from Washington D.C. to New York City.³²

The Fillmore Post Office had a banner year in 1936 — the year that federal postal employees went under civil service. Before this, there had been no retirement benefits. According to Joel Schwartz, there was a new postmaster every time there was a new president! Now the rights of all postal employees would be protected.³³

Also in 1936, free mail delivery for the City of Fillmore became a reality. Prior to this, mail in the city had to be picked up at the boxes in the post office lobby. Preparations began for the big event. A survey of the city in September showed that 92% of the residents had put up mail boxes. Written civil service exams for city mail carriers were given at the Fillmore Post Office on Saturday, September 19. No women were allowed to apply. Free mail delivery was to begin on October 1.³⁴

Until the result of the civil service exams were announced, temporary carriers would be Bill Grady and Glen (Brick) Fansler, Jr.

Two daily deliveries were scheduled with the carriers leaving the post office at 9:15 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. The temporary carriers would not be in uniform and would not carry postage stamps, but they would collect mail to be taken to the post office. Residents were requested to use their house numbers and street addresses on all pieces of mail.³⁵ Parcels would be delivered by car by Earl (Pat) Harthorn as of October 9.³⁶

In preparation for mail delivery, drop boxes were installed in the city on September 30, 1936. The cement posts had "1936" embedded on one side near the top. First to post a letter in a drop box was the mayor at the time, Lester Price.³⁷ There were seven boxes in all, three being south of the railroad tracks. The largest box, on the corner of Ventura and Central, had a package compartment and was also used to relay mail to the carrier serving that district. Other boxes were installed at the corners of Central and Main (the Bank of America corner — now the Bank of A. Levy), Orange Grove and Santa Clara, Clay and Santa Clara, Mountain View and Sespe, Saratoga and First, and Third and Saratoga.³⁸ None of these drop boxes remain in 1989; however, two of the original concrete posts showing the year "1936" can still be seen, one at Saratoga and First, the other at Third and Saratoga. (Present collection boxes stand at the following locations: 3rd and Mountain View, 2nd and Central, A Street and 3rd, in front of 455 Sespe Avenue, Von's Shopping Center between Von's and Thrifty, and Los Serenos Drive and Ventura Street. Two boxes stand in front of the post office — one for stamped mail and one for metered mail. Four drive-by boxes are located behind the post office, two on alternate sides, with one box for metered and one box for stamped mail on each side.)³⁹

The results of the civil service exams for mail carriers were announced on January 16, 1937. John Case was to travel Route 1 — the business section east of Central and all territory north of Sespe with a few exceptions; Bill Grady was to travel Route 2 — the city west of Central and south of Santa Clara; Saratoga between Sespe and Main; and Clay and Mountain View between First and Main. The package carrier (the mounted route) was to be Glen Fansler who would also be the substitute carrier for Routes 1 and 2. The carriers began their appointed rounds in new uniforms of grey-blue; the trousers had wide black stripes down each leg. The carrier had the option of wearing a jacket or a shirt of the zipper

type. A jaunty matching cap completed the outfit.⁴⁰ These early carriers made two deliveries a day, six days a week, with no extra pay for overtime!

In 1942 the Federal Post Office adopted numbered postal zones for large cities (such as Chicago 6 and Los Angeles 4) to facilitate mail delivery. This system proved to be the forerunner of our present zip code system. The Zoning Improvement Plan (ZIP) was inaugurated in 1963 and officially adopted in 1981.⁴¹

A comprehensive reorganization of the entire postal service was completed on August 12, 1970, when President Nixon signed into law the Postal Reorganization Act. This act, which took effect on July 1, 1971, declared that the United States Postal Service was now a semi-independent agency within the executive branch of the government. This agency was to have non-Cabinet status. So the Postmaster General, given Cabinet status by President Jackson in 1829, lost Cabinet status in 1970.⁴² Hence, since 1971 the Postmaster General has been appointed by the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service instead of by the President of the United States.

On Thursday, May 9, 1985, the Fillmore Post Office received an attractive new sign,⁴³ still in place today. The original sign over the present post office was a simple one, spelling out in large block letters: U. S. Post Office. Not satisfied with this, Postmaster Edward Molina received permission from the Chamber of Commerce to use their familiar colorful logo.⁴⁴ The logo was the original creation of former Fillmore resident R. J. (Bob) Kennedy who now lives in Leesburg, Florida. Mr. Kennedy submitted his design to the Chamber at the request of the president, Bill Austin. To honor those objects most significant in the development of Fillmore, Mr. Kennedy placed a brightly colored orange, lemon, avocado, and oil-well on a black background surrounding green mountains against sunny blue skies.⁴⁵ Mr. Molina commissioned Jackie Martin of Atascadero, California to construct a new sign.⁴⁶ The logo appears on the right and the remainder of the sign is lettered:

U. S. Post Office
Fillmore, Ca. 93015.

Fillmore's Centennial Year, 1988, saw the installation of computers to tally patrons' purchases at the post office windows. Also,

as part of a nationwide budget cutback for the postal services, window service was shut down on Wednesday afternoons beginning February 17. The postal lobby remained open. Since the clerks who normally manned the counters were not laid off but were kept busy processing mail, the shut-down did not result in spectacular savings. To the relief of everyone, normal window service was resumed on Wednesdays in Fillmore in September.⁴⁷

When the post office moved into the Goble Building in 1951, the City of Fillmore had a population of 3,879 (1950 census); now, June of 1989, the population has increased to 11,000. Once again, the post office needs more space. Plans are under way to remodel the present facility, expanding into the attached building at 335 Central Avenue.⁴⁸ Duard Goble had his jewelry store at this address in 1951. In 1959, Jim Scherzinger had the store; in 1979, it was run by John Warren Collins. Richard and Mercelle Howard bought the entire Goble Building in 1982, opening their jewelry store in March 1983. Both Howards retired on March 31, 1989 and closed their business on May 31, 1989.⁴⁹ On July 1, 1989, the U. S. Postal Service took possession of the 1,200-square-foot store. It is hoped that the planned expansion will solve the Fillmore Post Office's space needs for some time to come.⁵⁰

Over a period of 100 years, the Fillmore Post Office has grown from a goods box in a rooming house to a computerized, air-conditioned building. But one thing has never changed — the friendly, efficient service that began in the days when R. G. Surdam carried the mail in his vest pocket across the Santa Clara River to Fillmore.

END NOTES

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- 2 From photograph given to Fillmore Museum by Tillie Harmonson.
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- 4 Sheridan, p. 442.
- 5 Gidney, Brooks, and Sheridan. *History of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties*, Vol. 11, p. 494.
- 6 Sheridan, p. 452; *Ventura Free Press*, November 13, 1891.
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- 8 *Ventura Free Press*, March 8, 1895.
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- 12 *Fillmore Herald*, February 2, 1940.
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- 17 *Fillmore Herald*, November 16, 1917.
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- 19 *Fillmore Herald*, January 26, 1951.
- 20 *Ventura County Cultural Heritage Book Survey Phase II*.
- 21 *Fillmore Herald*, April 6, 1951.
- 22 *Fillmore Herald*, June 1, 1951.
- 23 *Fillmore Herald*, June 2, 1961.
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- 25 Interview, Conejo Valley Stamp and Coin, Inc., Thousand Oaks.
- 26 *Fillmore Herald*, November 2, 1917.
- 27 "Sylvia Porter," *Ventura Star Free Press*, May 1988.
- 28 *Fillmore Herald*, March 17, 1911.
- 29 *Fillmore Herald*, January 3, 1913.
- 30 Interview with Ms. Galvin's niece, Lorraine Jones.
- 31 Interviews with Jim Haynes and Morris King.
- 32 *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Volume 19. USA: Macmillan, 1984 edition, p. 246 .
- 33 Interview with Joel Schwartz.
- 34 *Fillmore Herald*, September 25, 1936.
- 35 *Fillmore Herald*, October 2, 1936.
- 36 *Fillmore Herald*, October 9, 1936.
- 37 *Fillmore Herald*, July 16, 1981, p. 1 (article by Dorothy Lynch).
- 38 *Fillmore Herald*, September 25, 1936.
- 39 Interview with present postmaster, Edward Molina.
- 40 *Fillmore Herald*, January 22, 1937.

- 41 *World Book Encyclopedia*, Volume 15. Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1989, p. 632.
- 42 *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Executive Branch 1774-1977*.
- 43 *Fillmore Herald*, May 9, 1985.
- 44 Interview with Edward Molina.
- 45 Telephone interview with R. J. Kennedy.
- 46 Interview with Edward Molina.
- 47 *Fillmore Herald*, March 11, 1988.
- 48 *Fillmore Herald*, February 2, 1989.
- 49 Interview with Richard Howard.
- 50 *Fillmore Herald*, February 2, 1989.

FILLMORE POST OFFICE LOCATIONS

1. 1887-1888
E. B. Turner's Rooming House
northwest corner Main and Central
2. 1888-1889
Southern Pacific Railroad Depot
south side of Main, east of Central
3. 1889-1898
C.C. Elkins' General Merchandise Store
northeast corner Main and Central
4. 1898-1910
Richard Stephens' Grocery Store
northwest corner Main and Central
5. 1910-1916
Richard Stephens' Grocery Store (new building)
northwest corner Main and Central
occupied by Stephens' Store (1910-1911)
occupied by Cash Commercial Company (1911-1916)
6. 1916-1917
Building on Central Avenue, west side,
approximate location of Central Market, 1989.
7. December 3, 1917-January 3, 1920
Phil Roche's Jewelry Store, east side of Central,
approximate location of Ballard Furniture, 1989.
8. January 5, 1920-June 2, 1951
Masonic Building
455 Sespe Avenue
9. June 4, 1951
Post Office Building (Goble Building)
333 Central Avenue

FILLMORE POST OFFICE

Ventura County, California

POSTMASTER	TITLE	DATE APPOINTED
Elbert B. Turner	Postmaster	10/24/1887
Caswell Carl Elkins	Postmaster	03/26/1889
Lucius H. Amsbury	Postmaster	09/14/1891
Charles G. Willman	Postmaster	02/18/1892
Samuel A. Guiberson, Jr.	Postmaster	04/08/1895
Richard Stephens	Postmaster	11/17/1898
Phillippe P. Roche	Postmaster	02/25/1915
Theodore H. Zimmerman	Acting Postmaster	08/22/1921
Theodore H. Zimmerman	Postmaster	02/10/1922
Joel K. L. Schwartz	Acting Postmaster	03/08/1934
Joel K. L. Schwartz	Postmaster	02/09/1935
Maurice E. Ball	Acting Postmaster	05/31/1961
Maurice E. Ball	Postmaster	07/26/1965
Alfred V. Lopez	Officer-In-Charge	04/15/1977
L. Louise DePatz	Officer-In-Charge	12/05/1977
Carol A. Chaney	Postmaster	03/25/1978
Ernie G. Figueroa	Officer-In-Charge	12/01/1978
Edward C. Molina	Postmaster	06/16/1979

SOURCE

Office of the Postmaster General, Washington, D.C., June 18, 1987.

**FILLMORE POSTMASTERS
&
U. S. POSTMASTERS GENERAL**

POSTMASTER	DATE APPOINTED	U.S. PRESIDENT	POSTMASTER GENERAL
Turner	10/24/1887	Cleveland	William F. Vilas
Elkins	03/26/1889	Harrison	Donald M. Dickinson
Amsbury	09/14/1891	Harrison	John Wanamaker
Willman	02/18/1892	Harrison	John Wanamaker
		Cleveland	Wilson S. Bissel
Guiberson	04/08/1895	Cleveland	William L. Wilson
		McKinley	William L. Wilson
Stephens	11/17/1898	McKinley	James A. Gary
		T. Roosevelt	Charles Emory Smith
			Charles Emory Smith
			Henry C. Payne
			Robert J. Wynne
			George B. Cortelyou
			George von L. Meyer
		Taft	Frank H. Hitchcock
		Wilson	Albert E. Burleson
Roche	02/25/1915	Wilson	Albert E. Burleson
		Harding	Will H. Hays
Zimmerman	08/22/1921*	Harding	Will H. Hays
Zimmerman	02/10/1922	Harding	Hubert Work
			Harry S. New
		Coolidge	Harry S. New
		Hoover	Harry S. New
			Walter F. Brown
		F. Roosevelt	James A. Farley
Schwartz	03/08/1934*	F. Roosevelt	James A. Farley
Schwartz	02/09/1935	F. Roosevelt	Frank C. Walker
		Truman	Frank C. Walker
			Robert E. Hannegan
			Jesse M. Donaldson
		Eisenhower	Arthur E. Summerfield
		Kennedy	J. Edward Day
Ball	05/31/1961*	Kennedy	J. Edward Day
			John A. Gronouski

Ball	07/26/1965	Johnson	John A. Gronouski Lawrence F. O'Brien William M. Watson Winton M. Blount E. T. Klassen E. T. Klassen
		Nixon	Benjamin F. Bailar
		Ford	Benjamin F. Bailar Benjamin F. Bailar William F. Bolger William F. Bolger William F. Bolger William F. Bolger Paul N. Carlin Albert V. Casey Preston R. Tisch Anthony M. Frank Anthony M. Frank
Lopez	04/15/1977**	Carter	
Depatz	12/05/1977**	Carter	
Chaney	03/25/1978	Carter	
Figueroa	12/01/1978**	Carter	
Molina	06/16/1979	Carter Reagan	
		Bush	

*Acting Postmaster

**Officer-In-Charge

NOTE: Beginning in 1971 with E. T. Klassen, the Postmasters General have been appointed by the Board of Governors of the U. S. Postal Service instead of by the President.

There is no difference between an acting postmaster and an officer-in-charge. The former was used to designate a temporary postmaster until the Postal Reorganization in 1971 while the latter has been the preferred term since that date.

SOURCES

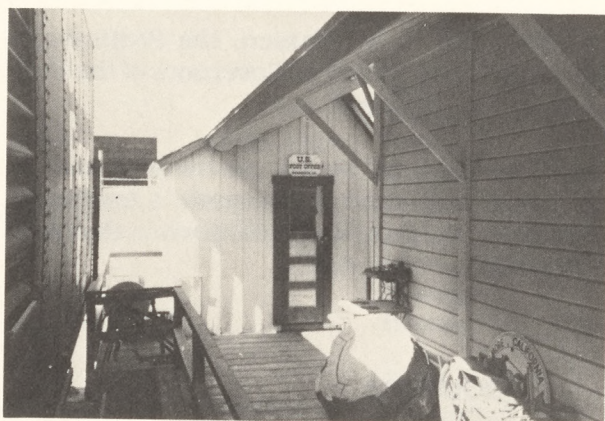
- Moroney, Rita L., Research Administrator/Historian, Office of the Postmaster General, Washington, D.C. 20260-0011.
 Sobel, Robert, Editor-In-Chief. *Biographical Directory of the U. S. Executive Branch 1774-1977*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977.
World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 15. Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1989. p. 712.

MOVING THE MAIL: Post Offices of the Sespe

II. The History of the Bardsdale Post Office

Royce G. Surdam was Bardsdale's first postmaster, appointed May 18, 1887. In an account of the history of this area, C. C. Elkins, pioneer resident of Fillmore, stated that, when he and his family arrived in Fillmore in December 1887, Surdam already had both a store and a post office in Bardsdale. The post office was probably in the store, the location of which is not now known. It is thought that the post office remained at the Surdam store when James R. McKee became postmaster (February 25, 1891) and when Mrs. Elizabeth E. Chadsey (called "Grandma") was appointed December 9, 1891.

When William E. Dorman was appointed Bardsdale postmaster on December 27, 1897, he was all ready for business. According to the *Ventura Free Press*, Mr. Dorman had "a little post office ready to take charge of the mail." Postmaster Dorman's grandson Harold, long-time Bardsdale resident, states that this post office was located half-



BARDSDALE POST OFFICE, EXTERIOR
Fillmore Historical Museum

way between the parsonage of the Bardsdale United Methodist Church and the Harold LeBard place which was on the corner of Bardsdale Avenue and Owen Street. Whether Postmaster Dorman constructed the little building himself or used an existing structure is not known.

An extensive search by Harold and Theycol Dorman has failed to discover an accurate description of the interior of the old post office building during its years of service. The only account has come from Agnes King Winkler Harris who used to stop in at the post office on

her way home from school. Agnes remembered that the interior was very cozy on a winter's day with heat from a wood stove and large stove-pipe. She also recalled that there was no desk nor any cubicles. Instead, the mail was stacked neatly on a table and given out from there.



BARDSDALE POST OFFICE, INTERIOR
Fillmore Historical Museum, 447 Main Street, Fillmore

The little post office remained in use during the tenures of the following postmasters:

George W. Cutler	November 16, 1898
George Hoagland	September 20, 1899
Nathan H. Huff	December 7, 1899
Amanda M. Sherrard	March 5, 1903

On May 15, 1906, the Bardsdale Post Office was discontinued with the mail going to Fillmore. After this, the little post office building was

used for a variety of purposes — a storage shed, a wood shed, a garage, a chicken coop — ending up at the corner of Bardsdale and Sespe Avenues on the property of Mrs. Elvin Daugherty (the former Amanda M. Sherrard), known to everyone as "Aunt Amanda".

For many years, Harold Dorman had felt that the historic old Bardsdale Post Office should be presented to the Fillmore Museum in memory of his grandfather. In 1982, with the help of the Museum, Mr. Dorman contacted the present owners of the old Daugherty property, Don and Jesse Wileman, and their family. The Wilemans approved the idea and donated the building to the Museum. Willing helpers aided Mr. Dorman in transporting the little building by truck to its new home, a move which encountered some difficulty in crossing the Santa Clara River Bridge. Once the old post office was at its new location, Mr. Dorman donated \$1,000 to the Fillmore Historical Society's general fund to aid in restoring the building and securing it properly into the Museum site at 447 Main Street. Donations were made also by Dave's Building Supply, J. E. Kirby, and other interested people.

In 1988, Fillmore's Centennial Year, the Bardsdale Post Office was opened to the public. The single room is furnished with an old desk donated by Mr. Floyd Legan of Piru. The origin of the desk is unknown, but Mr. Legan does remember that the desk withstood the ravages of the St. Francis Dam disaster in 1928. Mr. Dorman had the desk repaired at his own expense, feeling that it was of the proper period to have been used in his grandfather's post office. The old building also houses the postal boxes formerly used in the Fillmore Post Office, as well as all the Museum's post office memorabilia. On file there, too, are histories of the Fillmore, Bardsdale, and Sespe post offices, with pictures of many of the post office sites.

SOURCES

Fillmore Herald - 1950 (*month and day not known*).
Sheridan, Sol N.. History of Ventura County Vol. I, p. 445.
Ventura Free Press - December 30, 1897.

Interviews:

Harold and Theycol Dorman.
Dorothy Haase, Fillmore Museum Curator.
Rita Moroney, Research Administrator/Historian
Office of the Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.

BARDSDALE POST OFFICE

Ventura County, California

POSTMASTER	TITLE	DATE APPOINTED
Royce G. Surdam	Postmaster	05/18/1887
James R. McKee	Postmaster	02/25/1891
Mrs. Elizabeth E. Chadsey	Postmaster	12/08/1891
William E. Dorman	Postmaster	12/27/1897
George W. Cutler	Postmaster	11/16/1898
George Hoagland	Postmaster	09/20/1899
Nathan H. Huff	Postmaster	12/07/1899
Amanda M. Sherrard	Postmaster	03/05/1903

Discontinued May 15, 1906; mail to Fillmore.

From the office of the Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.

MOVING THE MAIL: Post Offices of the Sespe

III. The History of the Sespe Post Office

The post office called Sespe was established "at the switch just west of the bridge," according to an article in the *Ventura Free Press* dated March 23, 1894. A mail car would deliver all area mail at the Fillmore Depot. Then Sespe mail would be carried from Fillmore by Frank Linebarger. The first postmaster, Mrs. Lulu E. Blackman, was appointed February 7, 1894. A site location report for the United States Post Office Department, filled out by Mrs. Blackman on January 19, 1894, was co-signed by then Fillmore postmaster, C. G. Willman. This site location report stated that approximately fifty families would be served by the Sespe Post Office.

Mr. Linebarger's tenure as mail carrier was brief. On May 18, 1894, the *Ventura Free Press* stated: "Future deliveries of mail at Sespe Station will be made by train."

Mrs. Angie Allee, second postmaster, was appointed July 10, 1895. Her successor, Caroline E. Smith, was appointed January 25, 1898. In a site location report dated July 27, 1899, Mrs. Smith gave the location of the Sespe Post Office as the Brownstone Spur, 105 rods north of the main railroad line, and 1/4 mile west of the Sespe River on Mail Route Number 17651.

It is uncertain where the Sespe Post Office was located during the tenures of the next two postmasters, Ira B. Martin (appointed November 2, 1901), and Arthur W. Parson (appointed June 11, 1906). Mr. Morris King recalls that Ira B. Martin ran a grocery store on Sespe (now known as Grand Avenue); perhaps he, and then Mr. Parsons, kept the post office in the store. Their successor, George William Tighe, appointed April 16, 1907, operated a successful grocery business in Fillmore. Mr. King recalls that Tighe opened a kind of branch store on Sespe; a *Fillmore Herald* article, dated April 16, 1907, stated that George Tighe would keep the post office in his store at Sespe.

Then Lee Alexander Phillips took over the store. He was appointed postmaster July 7, 1908, and held the position for the next 24 years,



SESPE POST OFFICE
And Lee Phillips' Grocery Store

the only Sespe postmaster whose tenure lasted more than a brief period of time.

Phillips' grocery store and post office, which many area old-timers still remember, was located, according to the 1930 *Directory of Santa Paula, Ventura, and Fillmore*, 1 and 3/4 miles northwest of Telegraph Road. The post office was separate from the grocery section, with inside boxes for the mail. Residents had to stop by for their mail as

there was no delivery. Lee Phillips and his wife, the former Lola Horrel, lived next door to the post office store.

On September 15, 1932, the Sespe Post Office was discontinued with all Sespe mail going to Fillmore.

SOURCES

Directory of Santa Paula, Ventura, and Fillmore, 1930.

Fillmore Herald, April 16, 1907; July 7, 1908.

Post Office Site Location Reports - January 19, 1894 and July 27, 1899 (on file at the Fillmore Museum). *Ventura Free Press*
- March 23, 1894, p. 8, col. 3, - May 18, 1894, p. 2, col. 2.

Interviews:

Rita Moroney, Research Administrator/Historian, Office of the
Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Frances Mayhew and Mr. Morris King, area residents.

SESPE POST OFFICE

Ventura County, California

POSTMASTER	TITLE	DATE APPOINTED
Mrs. Lulu E. Blackman	Postmaster	02/07/1894
Mrs. Angie Allee	Postmaster	07/10/1895
Caroline E. Smith	Postmaster	01/25/1898
Ira B. Martin	Postmaster	11/02/1901
Arthur W. Parsons	Postmaster	06/11/1906
George William Tighe	Postmaster	04/16/1907
Lee Alexander Phillips	Postmaster	07/07/1908

Discontinued September 15, 1932; mail to Fillmore.

SOURCE

Office of the Postmaster General, Washington, D. C.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Rita Moroney, Research Administrator/Historian,
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Sheldon Ball
Evelyn Harthorn Bartels
Conejo Valley Stamp and Coin, Inc., Thousand Oaks
Alice Harthorn Crocker
Harold and Theycol Dorman
Josephine Schwartz Fansler
Fillmore Herald
Fillmore Public Library
Dorothy Haase, Fillmore Museum
Hansen's Fillmore Studio
Jim Haynes
David Ingalls
Ron Ipswitch
Lorraine Jones
R. J. Kennedy
Morris King
Frances Mayhew
Rose McDowell
Edward Molina
Goldie Rice
Bill Stocker
Ventura County Museum of History & Art
Mr. & Mrs. Cliff Wileman
Noreen Withers, City Clerk, Fillmore

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Errata

Volume 33, Number 4

"Basques in Our Past" by Floyd S. Markham

Both Bill Friend and Elizabeth Erro de Hvolboll write to tell us that the widow of Cesareo Lataillade, María Antonia de la Guerra, was never married to Ulpiano Indart (see page 22). The widow of Cesareo Lataillade married Don Gaspar Eugenio Orena y Gomez de Escandon in 1854, five years after the death of Cesareo Lataillade in 1849.

Bill Friend checked with Richard Esparza of the Santa Barbara Historical Society and found that as many as twenty-two different María Antonia de la Guerras lived in this region.

Elizabeth Hvolboll adds that "Juaregi" should be changed to read "Jauregi" — page 29; and "Amerikanauk" to read "Amerikanuak"; "Douglas" to read "Douglass" — p.p. 26 and 27.



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